

**REMARKS**

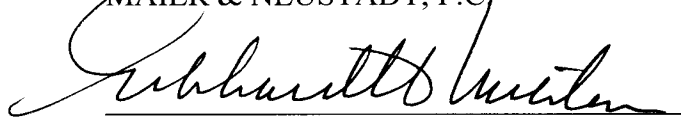
Entry of the present amendment before examination on the merits is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-15 are currently active in this case. The above preliminary amendment cancels Claims 16-18 without prejudice or disclaimer. Applicants reserve the right to file a continuation or a divisional application with subject matter as recited in cancelled Claims 16-18.

Accordingly, an examination on the merits of Claims 1-15 is believed to be in order, and an early and favorable action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,  
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Eckhard H. Kuesters  
Attorney of Record  
Registration No. 28,870

Customer Number  
**22850**

Tel: (703) 413-3000  
Fax: (703) 413 -2220  
(OSMMN 06/04)

Nikolaus P. Schibli, Ph.D.  
Registration No. 56,994